Holy Smoke! It's a Smokescreen for Bigger Government

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Raise taxes on American workers who make little more than $250 a week, and pay billions of dollars to lawyers who make far more than $250 an hour. That's what the tobacco bill will do.

The trial lawyers promoting it are so powerful that they even got the Senate to vote 58 to 39 to defeat an amendment that would have capped their fees at $250 an hour. The trial lawyers are one of the most important special-interest groups that elected Bill Clinton, and the tobacco bill is better than winning the lottery.

Contrary to what Clinton and sponsor John McCain (R-AZ) claim, the tobacco bill isn't about kids or about health. It's about greed, big tax increases, and Bigger Government.

While the trial lawyers will "only" get billions of dollars from the tobacco bill, Clinton will get hundreds of billions of dollars to expand the reach and mischief of Big Government. The bill will create seventeen new government agencies with awesome new powers including the authority to spend three-quarters of a trillion dollars.

All this money will come from a tax increase of up to $100 a month on low-income smokers. About 34 percent of the new tax will be paid by those who make less than $15,000 a year, and about 59 percent will be paid by those earning less than $30,000, while only two percent will be paid by those making more than $150,000.

The bill will increase the cigarette tax by $1.10 a pack. Wall Street analysts believe that, when all provisions of the tobacco bill are taken into account, the actual price increase will be closer to $3 a pack.

Why is Congress punishing the very people we are told are victims?

Why is Congress spending taxpayers' money to subsidize the farmers who grow tobacco, and at the same time imposing a discriminatory tax on the people who use their products?

The money generated by the gigantic tobacco bill all flows in the wrong direction. Low-wage American workers will be hit with an oppressive tax because of the sins of the tobacco companies, and the tobacco companies will be hit with oppressive fines for the sins of teenagers who refuse to stop smoking.

The bill might make some sense if the three-quarters of a trillion dollars were refunded to the taxpayers in tax cuts. But that's not the plan; instead, the money will enrich the politicians beyond their wildest fantasies.

The National Taxpayers Union has issued a "Comparison-Report Card" showing that the tobacco bill is "strikingly similar" to Clinton's tremendous tax hike in 1993. Every single Republican in Congress courageously voted against Clinton's 1993 tax hike, but today the weak-kneed Republican leadership supports the tobacco tax bill because it's wrapped in kids.

There are two enormous differences between these two big tax increases -- where the burden falls and where the money goes. The 1993 tax hike fell mostly on the so-called rich and the excess revenues went for deficit reduction, but the tobacco tax will fall mostly on low-income Americans and the revenues will fuel Bigger Government.

The tobacco bill is deviously designed to provide tax revenues for all Clinton's liberal spending programs, particularly federal babysitting, "educating parents," institutionalizing children at ages three and four, giving extravagant new funding to the highly politicized Centers for Disease Control, and even Clinton-Kennedy nationalized health care.

The tobacco bill gives Big Brother Federal Government vast new powers by creating dozens of new federal crimes. It gives broad new powers to the Food and Drug Administration to regulate, and even ban, both tobacco and tobacco advertising.

The tobacco bill is a prescription for a federal police state. It gives the Federal Government the power to conduct monthly, random and unannounced inspections of all retail establishments, and to control the entire distribution chain of tobacco products in an effort to stop the inevitable black market that the high

cigarette tax will cause.

It gives the Federal Government the power to conduct multi-million-dollar mass-media propaganda campaigns to control our thinking. It provides $350 million dollars for Clinton and his cronies to go on junkets around the world to lobby foreign governments to ban smoking. (What a great opportunity to sell plane seats on these official trips to donors to the Democratic Party!)

The tobacco bill sets a dangerous precedent for the Federal Government to take control of a private, legal industry and milk it in order to enrich the politicians and the trial lawyers.

Wake up, Americans. This year, the target is smokers. When Big Brother has an extra three-quarters of a trillion dollars to spend, who will he target next? Owners of Sport Utility Vehicles? Gun owners? People who won't wear seat belts? Parents who spank their children? Homeschoolers?